The Family Times

The Only Fake News Worth Reading | December 25, 2024 | We've Aged Like Cheese: Sharp and a Little Crumbly

Look What You Started!

The Baby Boom of 2024

2024 was a banner year for babies in the Rugg family. "Look what you started!" declared Grandma Rugg when meeting Ariel for the first at Jessie's wedding.

The one thing for sure that all 3 cousins have in common is keeping everyone waiting for their arrival. Ariel was a full 9 days late and then finally came out fast and furious. Natalie resorted to gymnastic stunts and stall tactics to delay her labor. And Arlo followed waited a week to be sure he was good and ready to for his grand entrance.

Everyone thought for sure that Ariel was going to be crowned Heavy-weight Champion of 2024, but at the last minute Arlo swooped in and stole the title.

A
Ariel Faith Rugg
Born: April 9, 2024
At: 4:25 PM
Weight: 9 lb. 0 oz.
Length: 20.5 in.
Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
—Psalm 127:3

The Birth of Ariel

By Abigail (age 8)

On April 9th when we got home from the eclipse, mom was feeling a little bad. That afternoon mom asked me to take out the snack basket that she had been saving for when baby was coming. That's when me and Alexander thought mom was going to have the baby soon. THE MIDWIFE CAME AND MOM DID HAVE THE BABY, but there was a lot of blood. Mom went to the hospital, but Ariel, THE GIRL, was fine. Grandma Sharla And Grandpa John came over and stayed until mom and dad got home the next day. THE END.

20th Anniversary Edition

'Twas twenty years ago today
When on another Christmas Day,
A monumental gift was wrought
That not with money could be bought
And even now it carries on,
A tabloid-printing paragon—
Reporting on that sibling troop
Which long ago have flown the coop,
Who now have children of their own,
And some of them are nearly grown.

It makes one wonder for how long
That they can keep it going strong.

Ariel Faith Rugg
4/9/2024

Natalie Rose Johnson
11/7/2024

Arlo Jess Rugg
12/15/2024

A
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Our House

At the Christmas Tree Farm

Picking a tree

The first one we saw ended up being the right one!

Christmas Time

By Aaron Rugg

On such a joyous tide as this,
At such a happy time,
When every heart abounds with bliss
And laughter rings sublime;

It seems a shame to rush about
And have so much to do.
Alas, but reader: Time runs out.
I bid thee now adieu.

Merry Christmas from our house to yours!

The Angelic Proclamation (Luke 2:8–12)

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David **a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord**. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

Am
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Amusement

Thanksgiving Sleepover

By Andrew

On Thanksgiving, we went to have Thanksgiving dinner at Grandma Sharla and Grandpa John's house. Grandma Sharla made turkey, cranberry sauce, green beans, and extremely sweet sweet potato casserole. Mom and Abigail made two apple pies, (one for grandpa John's birthday present) a pumpkin pie, and a chocolate pie.

After lunch/dinner and dessert, we looked at the pictures that Grandma and Grandpa had taken when they were in New Zealand, taking special focus on the Hobbiton pictures. In addition to not quite going to Mount Doom, they also went to several other famous places such as Mount Cook.

Mom and Dad eventually took Attalia and Ariel home. We stayed up with Grandma and Grandpa playing games like DragonWood and Go Fish!. We also watched a VeggieTales where the VeggieTales characters put on a play of the first Christmas.

The next day we watched The Garfield Movie while eating breakfast. I liked it a lot better than a lot of Garfield episodes, as it was much less weird, and the dad was rather smart. Most videos these days think it's their responsibility to make the dad dumb.

We also did piano lessons with Grandma and special crafts with Grandpa John. I made a Christmas fish. (In Greek, ἰχθύς, is an acronym for Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior.)

For lunch, Grandma made cheeseburger macaroni and chocolate revel cookies, which were kind of like oatmeal bars, with chocolate in them. They were really good.

July 4th/6th Party

By Andrew

This year, we hosted a Fourth of July party on July 6th, since that was on a Saturday, and the 4th wasn't. (Boy was Sam Adams disappointed. He thought Independence day would be on July 2nd.)

We spent a lot of time getting things like the red, white, and blue trailmix cups and jelly cups ready. We were also celebrating a few Birthdays that day, so we were expecting some presents, but our first present was somewhat of a surprise. Grandpa had told us that he was bringing a grill over. However, he didn't tell us that he was *giving* us a brand new grill, which we first needed to assemble. The burgers we made with it were really good, by the way.

In addition to the grill, Uncle Ben also gave us whistle pops, which were a sucker version of a sliding flute thingy. We played with those (and pop-its) while watching the burgers cook.

After lunch, we all went downstairs with the uncles and aunts to play a hack of the original Super Smash Bros called Smash Remix. Uncle Caleb, in particular, had fun playing with Captain Falcon and Marth once again. One thing we did was have a free-for-all match with all the kids as GigaBowser, and then the winner faced against all the uncles and aunts. That winner was me. I still won against the uncles and aunts, but I had only one stock left at the end.

After that, we opened presents for all the summer birthday boys/girls, none of which were me. Oh, well. Maybe next year. At least Attalia got a bubble blowing mower, so she can mow the lawn for me. She also got a bubble blowing cat.

After everyone left, we played with sparklers and glow-stick battles until long after sundown.

B
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Ben & Nicole

Wonderful Wedding

Violin Virtuosos

Kinley and Rylinn continue to study the violin in school.

Meeting Cousin Natalie Rose

Rock-climbing Rylinn

Muddy Four-Wheeling

Engaging Eclipse

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Books

My Favorite Book Of 2024

By Abigail

My favorite book I read this year would probably be The Forbidden Attic in the Mandie series. It is about when Mandie goes to a school in Ashville. At first she dose not want to leave to go to a school far away it is not that far away but still not in Franklin. She thinks they tech silly things there like how to be a lady. She dose not like the person that is sharing the bed with her, Her name is April. Though it is against the rules do go out of bed after ten o clock she dose anyway, which leads her to strange sounds of a girl crying, she finds the new girl named Celia she is so sad about her fathers death and, her mother is not feeling well because of it. Fortintly Mandie is just like her because her father had died too. The next day they ask the teacher's if Mandie could sleep with Celia, they tell them about Mandie getting out of bed too. She gets in trouble a bit but the teacher dose not what Mandie to move but her sister the other teacher thinks it is okay. Mandie starts to like school more now and her old indan friend uncle Ned (who promised her father that he would watch over her when her father died) visits her at night after ten in the yard. April is suspended from school for ten days for making trouble. Soon Mandie and Celia are suspended to Mandies grandmothers house because there is strange noseis. Mandie is scared about her because she did not want her mother to marry her uncle at first. But then she finds out that she is nice. When they go back they investigate it more and find out that it was a little girl named Hilda.

Unbroken

By Aaron

This year one of my favorite books that I read was *Unbroken* by Laura Hillenbrand. It tells the story of an airman in World War 2 that was taken prisoner by the Japanese. He goes through a variety of camps and meets a variety of different people, some kind and some cruel. He is eventually released, but he struggles with anger management and dreams of hunting and killing one of the prison officials that was particularly cruel to him. He eventually finds Jesus and his life is transformed. He is able to forgive his enemies and spends the rest of his life serving Jesus.

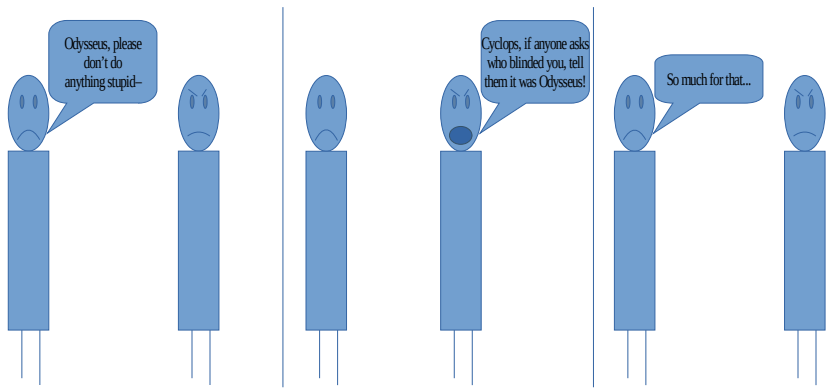
I liked this book because it told a lot of interesting details about army life and prisoner life in World War 2, and because it was well-written and inspiring.

April 1st Edit to *The Odyssey* Literature Log
(For His Brothers)

Aaron's Bonus Questions

- What do you think the moral for the story of the Cyclops was? Give as many answers as possible.
- What do you think the moral for the story of Aeolus, king of the winds, was? Give as many answers as possible.
- What do you think the moral for the story of the cattle of Helios was? Give as many answers as possible.
- Can you see any parallels to the Bible? List as many as possible.

Andrew's *The Odyssey* Comic


While escaping from the Cyclops…
Odysseus, please don't do anything stupid–
Cyclops, if anyone asks who blinded you, tell them it was Odysseus!
So much for that...

CJ
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Caleb & Jo

Biggest News of the Year!

Caleb and Joanna were ecstatic to announce the arrival of of Arlo Jess Rugg. Like all of the 2024 babies, he made everyone wait a until he was good and ready for his grand debut. It seems he wanted to be sure to make a name for himself from his very first performance. (But Joanna is the real Rockstar for delivering a 10 lb human.) Everyone is looking forward to meeting this new celebrity and seeing how Arlo interacts with his co-star, Rowan.

Arlo Jess Rugg

12/15/2024

at 8:09

10 pounds even!

Playing in the dirt and mulch are favorite pastimes.

Caleb gives Mario a run for his money for the Most Handsome Mustache Award.

Rowan Returns

Rowan starred in a second season of *The Rowan Show*. In this season Rowan goes on long hikes with mom, turns 2 years old (!), sings moving ballads, dons her cool girl glasses and snow gear, and rides a turtle. We're all looking forward to the spin off series Rowan and Arlo.

Ce
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Celebration

2024 was a banner year for babies! Three cousins born in the same calendar year for the first time in our generation's history. We're looking forward to celebrating Arlo soon!

Natalie's Baby Shower

By Abigail

In September, there was a baby shower for Aunt Liz's coming baby girl. We didn't know her name yet but it was a flower theme. Grandma Mary and Aunt Judy made all kinds of food and pretty decorations. We brought games and food there was games about guessing! One was bingo, and you had to guess what was in the presents I got a lot of bingo's, so I won that one. I just said what I saw! We got some some well at least me and Attalia got some succulent candles! It was at rock cut park and there was a lake with lily pads! After the baby was born we learned her name was Natalie Rose, so the flower theme was right.

There was so much family there it was almost like a family reunion.

We sang happy birthday to Great Grandma Rugg for her 19th birthday.

Grand Guests

Ariel had a great group of grandparents and adopted grandparents come to welcome her into the world.

Ch
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Challenge

Chicago Open 2024

By Aaron

I competed in the Chicago Open again this year. During preparation, I got all my online ratings to new peaks so I was hopeful I would do better this year than last year. The tournament lasted 3 days and we played 7 games–3 on the first day and 2 on the following. The first two games were relatively short with 1 hour for each side. The rest of the games had 80 minutes for each side with 30 extra minutes added if 40 moves were played.

In the first game, I was black against a fairly young kid. This game was fairly short and straightforward. I got a good position from the opening and my opponent blundered several pieces. I won by checkmate.

In the second game, I was white against an adult. He played an off-beat opening that basically led to equality until he blundered a knight. I won this game as well.

The third game shows the not-so-fun side of chess. My opponent made some mistakes in the opening that left him with weak pawns. It seems like such a simple thing, but it allowed me to take control from the beginning and slowly chip away at his defenses. My opponent held on for a while, but when it became clear that my correct plan would take a long time but end in sure defeat he resigned. This was the end of the first day.

In the fourth game I was White against a teenager. According to the engine, the game was almost perfectly equal down to the very end, but throughout much of the game I harbored winning chances because of my good bishop versus his bad bishop. (That is to say, my bishop was on the opposite color of my central pawns while his was on the same color as his central pawns. Since you can't move through your own pieces, my bishop had more freedom to move than his.) Eventually we got into an endgame where I was slightly better… and then my opponent had a miscalculation and I won.

The fifth game demonstrates the power of fear. I was Black against an adult playing White. I played the Sicilian Defense, which is known as one of Black's most aggressive replies to 1.e4. The variation we played called for both players to stick to their plans: I must attack White's king with all my might, and White must try to break through in the center before he gets checkmated. On the surface, it may seem like the attack on the king is the more dangerous. The problem is, however, that the kings usually scuttle to the side of the board in the opening, and therefore an attack on the king must also be an attack on the wing, which by nature is weaker than an attack in the center. If White makes a successful breakthrough in the center, Black's wing attack will fail and leave him in an inferior position. My opponent was unaware of this, however, and as my attack built up he responded by moving all his pieces to the kingside to defend. Defenders are usually more passive than attackers, however, and since I had more kingside space I could build up more attackers than he could defenders. The White position folded in less than 25 moves (this is called a miniature.) This ended the second day.

The sixth game I was White against another teenager. The game was very equal. I had a slight advantage at one point, then squandered it with an oversight, and then had a drawn position until I miscalculated in the endgame and lost. This put me at 5 points out of 6. If I won the next game I would ensure tied second place and a decent prize.

The seventh game I was Black against a young adult. (As a side note, I always seem to have more Blacks than Whites in tournament play.) My opponent kinda put me off at the very beginning–whenever he made a move he would bob his head with a mocking expression on his face. He played the same bad opening my opponent in game 3 played, but instead of accepting weak pawns he played an unsound gambit. That didn't surprise me much–you can tell a lot about a person's opening from their character. The gambit may have been unsound but it nevertheless gave him more compensation than the poor kid in round 3. I was up a pawn but he had an open position and potential for an attack. He slowly began to improve his position–and then he got a cocky smile, did a little head-bob and sacrificed his rook. That shouldn't work. I just prevented that. I checked my lines again and I still thought the sacrifice was unsound. I went to the bathroom and when I came back I found that my opponent had been making moves on the board to demonstrate his sacrifice to a bystander… which was definitely not legal. I checked to make sure I still had my queen and then I took his rook. His threat could easily be parried in a single move, and his smile got a little less cocky. I drove his pieces down the board for a while, and then all of a sudden he gave another cocky dance and sacrificed his knight. Well, perhaps "sacrifice" is too strong a word. As a famous chess author once wrote, "A sacrifice is when you give up material for something in return (doing it without a reason is known as insanity.)" My opponent was in fact lost nonetheless, but he was giving up his knight for a single check which would lead to a queen trade. My opponent dragged out the game for a while, but I was up a rook and there was no real hope. Eventually he flicked his king over and walked off. I offered him a handshake but he said "Sorry, I don't shake hands with people I don't respect." Funny you should mention it… Technically you're not allowed to refuse a handshake, and better players than he have forfeited for not shaking hands, but he lost anyway so it was fine.

With that win my score was 6/7 which was good for shared second, which is the best score I've ever gotten on this tournament. All glory be to Christ!

Ch2
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Challenge

Hebrews Challenge 2024

By Aaron

This year Scriptoriums.com was offering another Scripture Memory Challenge. Last year it was to memorize at least 50 verses and then recite them. This year it was to memorize the book of Hebrews. We would get a week per chapter (except for Hebrews 11, when we got two weeks. Hebrews 11 is the longest chapter in the book of Hebrews.) and at the end of the week we would have to recite the chapter and fill out a study sheet with questions about the chapter. Hebrews has 13 chapters, so we got 14 weeks to memorize because of the bonus week for Hebrews 11.

If we finished all the chapters before April 14th, we would get $50. At the end of the challenge, if we could recite the entire book of Hebrews again in longer sections (roughly 100 verses each) we would get $50 again. Then everyone who finished memorizing the book of Hebrews would get the opportunity to take a test. The person who scored highest would get $100 dollars.

To be eligible to recite the book of Hebrews in longer sections and to take the test you had to attend the Conway Scriptorium in Arkansas. Scriptoriums are events where people gather together and memorize parts of the Bible and then recite them dramatically.

Originally we thought we wouldn't be able to go to the Scriptorium because the new baby was supposed to arrive around that time, so we just signed up to memorize the book of Hebrews without going to Conway. Later, however, we asked Grandpa Jeff to take us to the Scriptorium and he agreed, so we got to go to the Scriptorium too.

I was able to memorize and recite Hebrews 13 on April 1st, the earliest possible date. I had forgotten to finish some study sheets, though, so I went and did that a few days afterward. About six days before the event I started studying for the test and reviewing Hebrews (since I had mostly forgotten to review the chapters I had learned before). I was able to finish the second recitation of Hebrews with the required accuracy during the trip to Arkansas, and Alexander was able to finish reciting Hebrews 13 to finish the first recitation during our trip down as well. Then there was only the test…

On the day of the test eight people showed up to take the test, including me and Alexander. The guy told us to follow him to the test room. One of the girls taking the test said "Why does this feel so much like Bible Bee?" and her mother responded "Because you've never been to public school." making us all laugh.

The test consisted of 50 questions and 5 tiebreaker questions, which would only be used in case of a tiebreaker. The first 50 questions were pretty easy and consisted mainly of questions taken directly from the study sheets they gave us or easy trivia questions. The tiebreaker questions were as follows:

1. How many times is Moses mentioned in the book of Hebrews?
2. In which chapters is Abraham mentioned in the book of Hebrews?
3. In which chapters is the name Jesus not used in the book of Hebrews?
4. In which chapters is the word "better" used in the book of Hebrews?
5. In which chapters is the word "blood" used in the book of Hebrews?

The tiebreakers were at the end of the test, and as people gradually made it to the end of their tests they began to laugh (quietly). I finished the main portion of the test in about 5 minutes and spent the remaining 25 minutes trying to figure out the tiebreakers. I and one other girl were the last people in the room.

After we ran out of time the guy took our tests and we went outside. I thought that because the first 50 questions were so easy and the last 5 questions were so hard, a lot of people would get perfect and it would mostly be decided on the tiebreaker questions…

After they graded the scores, they announced that the tiebreakers had not broken any ties after all. There was only one tie and the people who had tied had each only gotten one tiebreaker question right. They both tied for fourth with 6 incorrect questions. Ellia and Faith Pentimone (two sisters) got the third and second prizes with only 4 and 3 incorrect questions (respectively), and I got first place with 2 incorrect questions. (I still wonder what they were.) Sadly, Alexander didn't place on the test but I'm pretty sure he got 5th.

C
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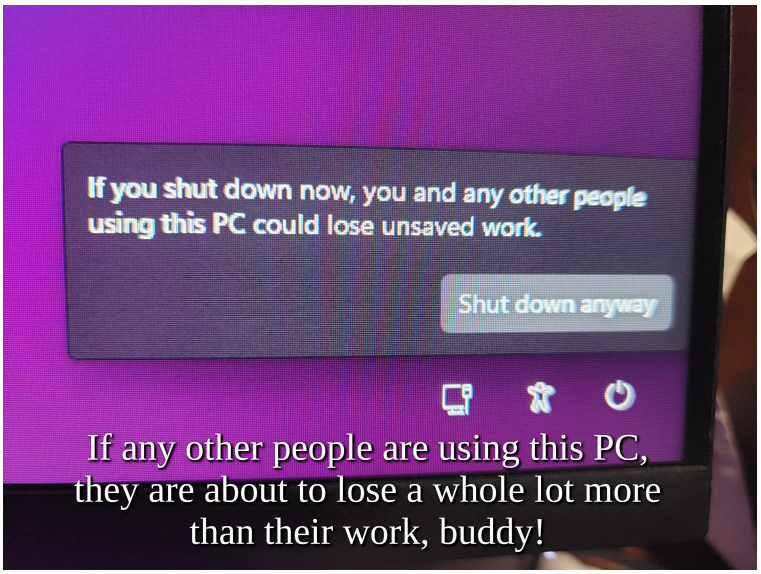
Comics

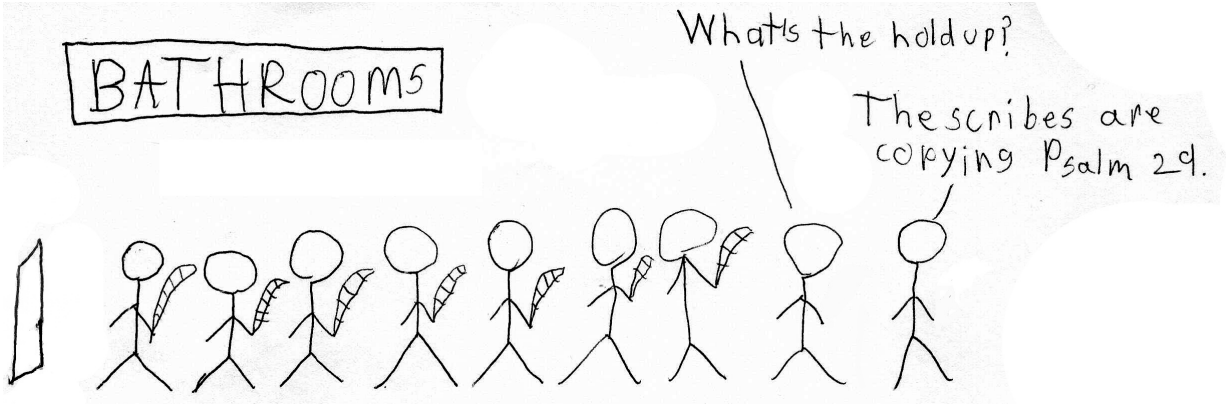
Would it make mom laugh?

Aaron: Mom never laughs.
Alexander: Mom almost smirks at Tongarango shows sometimes.


If you shut down now, you and any other people using this PC could lose unsaved work.
Shut down anyway
If any other people are using this PC, they are about to lose a whole lot more than their work, buddy!

Amusing Attalia-isms

- I love my favorite belly button. It's mine.
- But I already brushed my teeth last year mom!
- Un-hug me!
- I went potty yesterday!
- I'm not cute. I'm very grumpy.
- Sorry, I knocked that down yesterweek!
- My nose is tired.



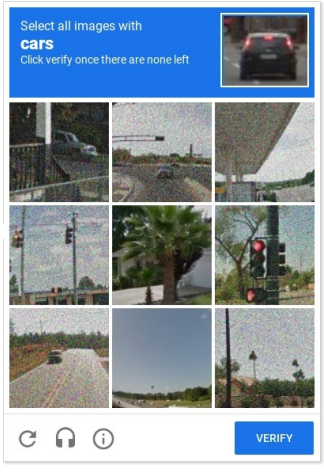
A Brief History of Captcha

2005

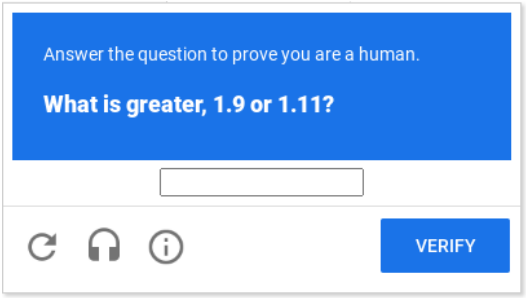
As a protection against automated spam, you'll need to type in the words that appear in this image to register an account:
(What is this?)
sepalbeam

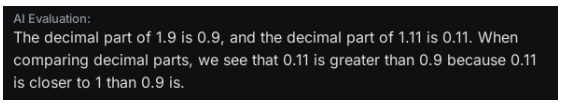
2010

2020



2024




AI Evaluation:
The decimal part of 1.9 is 0.9, and the decimal part of 1.11 is 0.11. When comparing decimal parts, we see that 0.11 is greater than 0.9 because 0.11 is closer to 1 than 0.9 is.

C2
The Family Times
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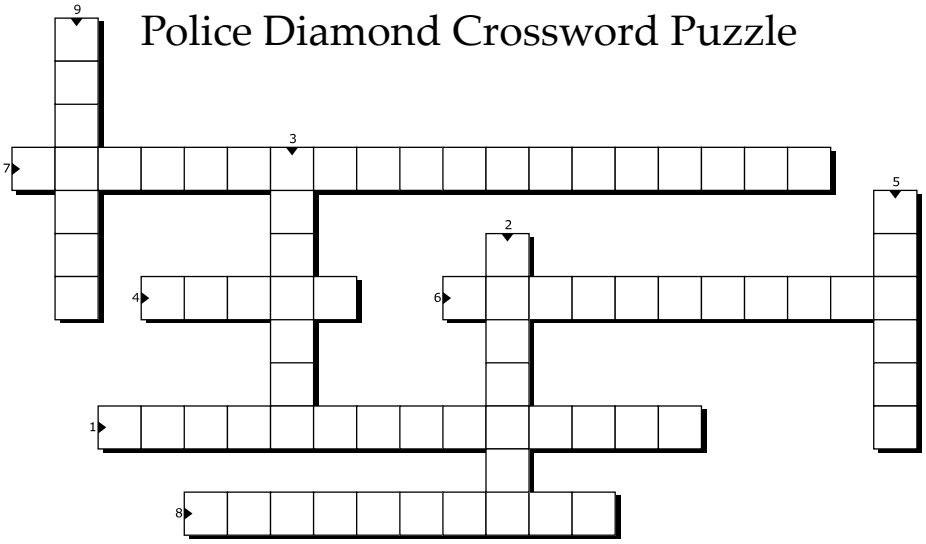
Comics²

Best Foot Forward

One must put their best foot forward when talking with Emperor Gestahl. 1 Thief, 1 Gambler, 1 Moogle, and 1 Wild Boy should make a lasting first impression.

The Proper Way to Deal With Captchas

Police Diamond Crossword Puzzle



1. Constabulary Gemstone (two words).
2. ___ House.
3. ___ Flanagan
4. The name of Chamberlain Sinclair's pet rock.
5. The Butler
6. The Animal Fruit (two words)
7. The Gypsy. Hint: Grandpa Jeff was sad Aunty Liz didn't name Natalie this (two words)
8. The Lord of the poets (two words)
9. Chamberlain Sinclair's sidekick.

Alexander when putting together the porch chairs, "It's a good thing that I don't know any swear words."

Attalia: I'm too big to put my coat away.
Andrew: You mean you're too small.
Attalia: No, not small. It's little!!!

Amusing Andrewisms

- If you have to think that's a bad sign.
- Mom: Andrew, don't clean out your ears right now!
  Andrew: I'm going to!!!
- I wish I could think less and concentrate more.
- I couldn't count. I was too busy breathing.
- If I could just stop thinking so much I would remember more.

Co
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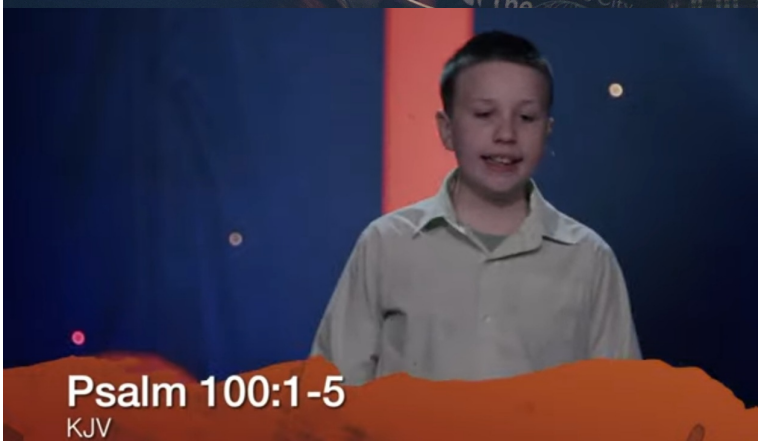
Competition

Bible Bee Junior Semi-finals

By Alexander

This year was my first year getting into Semi-finals in Bible bee. During the announcement ceremony I was nervous. I thought I might get in, because I felt pretty good about the test and my orals, but I wasn't completely sure. In Bible bee, the top 15 move on to Semi-finals and I was tenth. I was really happy, but also sad Andrew didn't get in. After the ceremony, they had some paper-work to fill out and a rehearsal.



The next day I was preparing my verses, and Mom had me change into nice clothes. After that Mom brought two more options for shirts for me, and we went to get my clothes reviewed. They said what I was wearing was fine, so I said goodbye to Mom and went backstage. Backstage everyone was trying not to think about Semi-finals and asking each other's versions. People were also handing around card decks for people to sign. Then the countdown started, and the Juniors all agreed to shout "JUNIORS RULE!" when it ended.

The first round was a scored recitation round. We were called on stage one at a time, and we were asked to recite memory passages, and we would be scored for accuracy. Then the bottom two scores were eliminated. I was really happy that I got Mark 1:1-11 because that was one of my best verses. One person couldn't recite a passage and I think two others made some mistakes, so those three were eliminated.

The next round was sudden elimination round, where any mistake eliminates you. I was also glad that I got Psalm 100:1-5, another of my favorite ones. All of us moved on in that round.

The next round was a question round, where all the contestants came up with "Clickers" that had A, B, C, D, (And E but they never use it) buttons that were for answering questions, and the bottom. When we started, somebody had to go to the bathroom, and then the clickers weren't working right. I honestly didn't think I would get past that round, but then I heard another person saying that he only got two right, so I felt a little better after that. It turned out that I wasn't in the bottom two scores, so I moved on.

The last round was another sudden elimination round, and I got one that I didn't like very much, Ezekiel 11:14-21, nevertheless, I got through it perfectly.

However more than five (only five move on to Finals) got perfect, so they went down to tie-breaks. I was pretty sure I wouldn't go on, which I didn't, because there was a tie-breakers from the third round, which I didn't do well in. But actually I was kind of glad I didn't get into Finals, because I didn't have the longer passages memorized as well and probably wouldn't have done great.

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Competition²

Bible Bee Senior Semi-finals

By Aaron

This year both me and Alexander made it to the Bible Bee Semifinal round. I competed in the Senior division, and Alexander competed in the Junior division.

We went backstage an hour before the start to get set up. The lady checked our outfits and we got our microphones set up. There were 15 contestants in total. I knew a lot of them, and three of them had been in Junior Semifinals with me two years ago. We talked about the test we had to take to get into Semifinals, and one person gave out a bunch of little glass ducks with Bible verses on them, which was funny. Pretty soon, the round began.

This first round was a scored recitation round. Everyone would recite a passage, and points would be deducted for any errors. The lowest two scores would be eliminated. I was the 8th person to recite, so I was in the middle of everyone. My recitation went well, but one girl blanked out in the middle of her passage, which was sad, and two other people had two mistakes so they got eliminated.

The second round had shorter passages, but any mistake would eliminate a contestant. I got my passage perfect, but unfortunately one of my friends messed up so he got eliminated. We were down to 11 contestants.

The third round was a question round. We each got little "clickers" that looked a lot like Wii controllers, and we would press A, B, C, or D in response to a question asked by the moderator. The questions increased in point value as they went on. I got 7/10 correct, but I mostly messed up on the less valuable questions (which in my opinion were harder than the more valuable questions) so I thought I had a good chance at making it through to the Final round. The bottom two scores were eliminated again, so two more people were out.

The final round was another elimination recitation round, but with longer passages instead. Sadly, me and one other boy got knocked out here due to mistakes. The good news was that one boy was able to make it to Finals, which is good because the very first year we competed the Senior finalists were all girls–all 5 of them–and girls won every single division.

Anyway, Semifinals was fun and I'm glad I got to compete in it. Lordwilling I'll improve my craft and do better next year.

Semifinals announcement happy face

Beanboozeled siblings and friends during semi training

Recitation during Semifinals

Entertainment

Busy Weekend

Wedding, Sleepover, and Piano Recital

By Abigail

On the day before the the recital there was a wedding that all of the Rugg side of the family went to. The Piano Recital was in Grandpa John's church right, so after the wedding we went to our grandparents house for a sleepover! On June 8th 2024 there was a Piano Recital. I wore a pretty wite dress with pink flowers on it and a pink jacket with buttons that looked like Gems! This year we played piano pieces by ourselves and duets. Aaron and Alexander played together and me and Andrew. After we played Piano at the recital there was a Piano cake! And punch! And other yummy food!

"The CLEP Proctor told me my mom is a rock star. I wasn't sure what to say… But in the end I think she meant it as a compliment."
– Andrew

IL ScriptureFest

By Aaron

This year we went to the Illinois ScriptureFest. A ScriptureFest is basically a bunch of people getting together to recite God's Word together. People memorize portions of God's word (ranging from a few verses to entire chapters) and recite them.

The passages they chose were from the post-exile period (the period after Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and began to bring the Jews into exile) and described how God's people remained faithful even when they suffered adversity.

We chose to memorize Esther 1 as a family. Esther 1 tells the story of how King Xerxes of Persia held a 187 day long feast to show off his power. He asks his queen, Vashti, to come in and show off her beauty to the nobles, but she refuses. Xerxes is angry and asks his wise men what to do. Memucan, one of the wise men, says they should throw her out of the queenship and find a new queen.

We all dressed up in costumes. Dad, Mom, and me were narrators. Andrew was Xerxes, Alexander was Memucan, and Abigail was Vashti. Attalia said "Esther 1" at the beginning of the passage. Alexander thought Memucan should be fat since he had been feasting for 187 days, so he stuffed a pillow in his shirt and got to eat an apple on stage.

There were other good recitations too. The rest of Esther, of course, and then Daniel, and parts of Ezekiel. One family acted out the story of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and the fiery furnace.

After the recitations we ate dinner, and then we played tag and Cops & Robbers until it was time to go.

Food & Dining

Gumpfrump's Tasty Treats

By Abigail

Gumpfrump knows a tasty treat, a mint he meets for it is not a beet. For the length of his tongue cannot be beat. Oh yum divine take me forevermore. Oh how he love treats the most tasty ones, oh the treats he meets are the best of kinds how good they are forevermore the tasty treats, oh yum how you are the best forevermore. With old Tom Trow, old Bill batter, Governor, Trilly Dilly,he munches away at the best of times forevermore. Oh how he loves to sit by the sea eating treats, the best of treats. The End.

Don't spill it out of the bowl.
"Spill it in?" – Attalia

Making Homemade Gummies

By Alexander

When we went to go to Grandpa's birthday, we gave him a homemade gummy machine. It had a pot in the middle where you would put the gelatin, and then it would heat up, and then you could pour it into the molds. There were molds for gummy bears, worms, and Swedish Fish, and then… the biggest gummy bear of all time!!!!!! It was a huge mold that came along with it that looked just like an enlarged gummy bear, except it had the word BEAR printed across his chest in case you thought it was a worm or a fish. We went to the store to get some gelatin, and we grabbed a lot colors. We couldn't find any green, but we found plain, blue, red, and yellow. Ah, here's green! Then we went back to their house, and looked at the gelatin. We saw that the green was actually watermelon pink! We were also going to have a two-day sleepover, so we said goodbye to Mom and Dad, and went to bed. The next day we stuck circus peanuts in Abigail's pancakes and made the gummies. We made a big batch because we wanted a lot of small ones, and the big one. Unfortunately, the green turned out to be pink, but then we had an idea. We mixed Blue and Yellow gelatin, and got Green! We made the giant gummy bear with layers, and we stuck candy in for a heart and a brain. We dissected and devoured it. The next morning Aaron put some gummy bears into our biscuits. All in all, the gummy bears were pretty good.

Family Fun

Paintball

By Aaron

This year for my 16th birthday we went paintballing with Uncle Ben, Uncle Caleb and Uncle Brent. Once everyone arrived, the first game we played was Capture the Flag. There was a flag in the middle of the field and the first team to grab the flag and make it back without being shot won. Me, Dad, Andrew, and Alexander were on one team and Uncles Ben, Caleb and Brent were on the other team.

Our strategy was to go for the flag as soon as the game started. Dad rushed out and grabbed the flag while me, Andrew, and Alexander went out to cover him. Dad grabbed the flag and got almost all the way back when suddenly two shots rang out and Dad got hit! Somehow our opponents had shot all the way across the field! Fortunately, Andrew wasted no time. He shouldered his smoking gun, grabbed the flag and ran across the line to win the game. As it turns out, Andrew was the one that shot Dad, presumably because he was wearing the same color as Uncle Ben. Why Uncle Ben would be running to *our* base with the flag, and why Andrew would *want* to shoot him if he were is another mystery.

Then we played a defending the base game. I think Billy (one of the refs) joined the uncles' team at this point. This time, Alexander shot Dad (more friendly fire) and knocked him out so the uncles won.

Then we moved to another field. This field had hills and forts, and they put synthetic grass over it so you could lie down, but unfortunately stinging nettles grew through the grass in some parts. Me and Alexander took one part of the field and Dad and Andrew took the other part. Billy came and attacked on our side, and unfortunately my gun didn't work so I couldn't shoot while Billy shot me a few times at close range. Fortunately, Alexander managed to take him down without being shot. At this point it began to rain, and we went onto a speedball field. Unfortunately, the visors you wear to protect your face get kinda fogged up when it rains. We had also just switched teams, so I wasn't quite certain who was on my team and when I saw somebody moving down the field I shot him several times. It turned out to be Billy, but fortunately friendly fire doesn't count.

We played more games like that for a while, and then we decided to play Capture the Flag again. There were some new people and they suggested we play with a Medic. If someone gets shot, they get wounded until the Medic comes and revives them. The Medic can't be wounded by being shot.

The Medic can feel pain, however, and it seemed to be the general opinion that shooting the Medic was at least as useful as shooting anybody else, provided it was painful enough. So in the first game, our strategy was to rush toward the flag and have the Medic revive when necessary. Our player rushed toward the flag, got shot down and called for the Medic so Andrew rushed out to save him. Andrew technically couldn't be knocked out, but everyone shot him anyway just to slow him down. I think the other team won.

The next game Alexander was our Medic and Uncle Ben was the opposing Medic. Both teams rushed out. Uncle Ben rushed for the flag but I shot him down just in front of the flag. Uncle Ben called for the Medic while his teammates kept shooting at Dad (who was going for the flag.) Alexander kept faithfully reviving him in spite of all the people shooting him and we won that game too. After the game we realized that Uncle Ben was the opposing Medic, so he couldn't be shot, couldn't capture the flag and couldn't revive himself.

We played a few more games to use up the rest of our bullets. The final game we played was in the same wooded area we played Capture the Flag in. There were four new people playing in the game as well. Dad took out one with a shot to the hopper on his gun. The hopper is the ammunition storage on the gun. When he got the guy's gun, the hopper door burst open and all the bullets fell out, so the guy was out and his ammunition fell out–which was kinda sad and kinda funny at the same time. Dad took out the last guy with a Rambo. If you're within ten feet of someone, instead of shooting them (which is really painful at close range) you can say "Rambo!" and take them out without shooting them. Then we took a picture and headed home for ice cream.

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Games

Kingdom of the Unseen

By Alexander

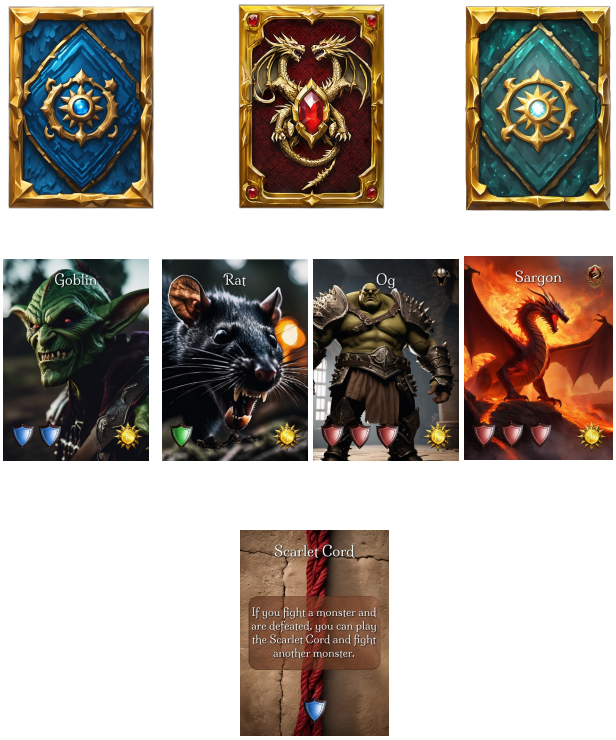
This year for our Host group in Bible Bee we wanted to make some games to play with the other people. Aaron suggested making the "Kingdom of the Unseen" (Though he didn't have a name for it yet) game with the basic game-play, and then I suggested making the questions monsters, so we got to work.

We wanted a name for it, and Dad suggested "Kingdom of the Unseen", so that stuck. We used an AI picture generator to make the pictures, and that was really fun, because even just seeing the hilarious attempts was always funny.

Here is how the game works. Set the three decks, Artifacts, Monsters, then Legendary Artifacts in a row, and then draw four monster cards and put them face up as shown. Next take a regular Artifact and put it below the landscape of monsters. Give an Artifact to each player. Choose a person to go first, and then proceed clockwise. On your turn, you may attack a monster or an Artifact. To fight, you select a monster, and then answer the questions defined on the card. A Green shield means an easy question, a Blue shield means a medium question, and a Red shield means a hard question. For example, if someone wanted to fight the Goblin, he would have to answer two medium questions. If he wanted to fight the Rat, he would have to answer an easy question. If he wanted to fight Og or Sargon, he would have to answer three hard questions. If he wanted to get the Scarlet Cord, he would have to answer a medium question. Monsters give you the points that are defined on the yellow star on the corner of the card. Artifacts are items you hold in your hand and use them to get Monsters. The goal is to get the most points at the end of the game. After a Monster is defeated, you draw another card from the Monster Deck to replace it. If the Artifact is taken, you draw a new one.

What about the Legendary Artifacts? Well, there are three different types of Monsters. Regular Monsters that do not have an insignia, Captains that have a helmet insignia, and Dragons that have a Dragon insignia (also you are supposed to shuffle the Captains and Dragons in the bottom half of the deck). A Dragon always gives you 20 points, and a Captain always gives you 15 points and a Legendary Artifact. There are only six Captains, six dragons, and six Legendary Artifact (One for each captain). The Legendary Artifacts are about twice as good as regular Artifacts, and Each Legendary Artifact is part of the Armor of the Lord!

Game Layout


Goblin
Rat
Og
Sargon
Scarlet Cord
If you fight a monster and are defeated, you can play the Scarlet Cord and fight another monster.

Lifestyle

Going To The Midwife

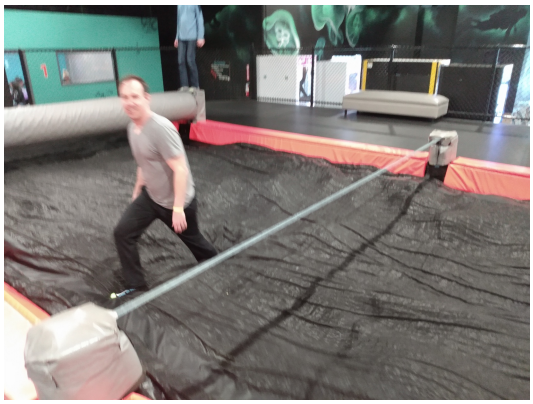
By Abigail

Before Ariel was born mom had to go to the midwife fortunately sometimes I GOT TO GO!!!!!!!! Sometimes we stopped at subway once we went to dunken donuts! The midwife is in Elgin. When we got to the building we had to go trough one of the doors there were two then we had to go up big stairs. I got to hear the baby's hart beat. I also got to talk to the midwife. I went with mom by myself!

Cousin Jumping day at FLOW

By Alexander

We got tickets to FLOW, which was a trampoline park for a Christmas present, so we and the cousins (Uncle Ben, Kinley, and Rylinn, the only cousins at that time) went. After that we went home, ate ice cream and did Geo-cashing, which is when you hunt for a box that somebody hid, and the one we found had you sign your name on a piece of paper inside of it. That was fun too because we had never done that before.



The Redemption of Henry Myers: A review

By Andrew Rugg

Henry Myers' story begins when he and two partners attempted to rob a bank. Technically it was a success, but some accidental shots caused them to leave prematurely. After being separated from his partners, he hid the money under a loose plank in the church. While he was getting out, he tripped and his gun went off, shooting the pastor who had just walked in. Henry spent the next few years hiding from all civilization, until he was found by his two former partners, who obviously wanted their bank money. He barely escaped, and was shot several times. Henry rode for several miles before collapsing due to loss of blood. Fortunately, a little girl discovered him, and and her family helped him recover. Over the months, he grew to love the little family, until discovering that their father was the pastor he had killed. He began to ride off, but after reading the pastors' Bible, he found salvation and turned around his life (and his horse).

I liked this movie for several reasons. While the production quality may not have been quite as magnificent as the Burn Family Studios' stunning *Birthright Outlaw*, the quality and acting were still nothing to be despised, and while there may be a few things that didn't make much sense, the plot had a good premise and was still extremely well done (which seems to be the greatest mistake sometimes made in Christian movies these days; getting a great sounding premise, but then killing the potential) and there were very few plot holes.

L2
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Lifestyle²

Center of the Universe Shifts (Slightly)

By Aaron

This year Grandma Lorna moved out of her old house into assisted living, shifting the center of the universe from So. 19Th ave to her current address. At least it is still in Wausau. We went up to help clean out her old house. First we went to her new apartment to visit with her. She showed us some of her papers and projects that she had written in school. We helped move a bunch of furniture out and looked through some of Grandma Lorna and Grandpa Roy's things. We found old tools like hammers, wrenches, files, etc. in good condition–most of them were solid metal and will probably be left to our great-grandkids someday. We found four chainsaws and got to keep two of them. Mom wanted the spinning wheel. We found an old fruit-stand poster that Grandma Sharla and her siblings used when they were kids and other toys that hadn't been used for years. We found a bottle of water that came from Grandpa Roy's bottled water place, and we saw a huge saw from a saw mill that we sadly didn't take home. After we finished cleaning and loading everything, we had pizza and fried cheese curds.

My Favorite Movie

By Alexander

One of my favorite movies this year was Darkest Hour, where Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister of England and (when others push towards making negotiations with Hitler) plans the boat rescue for thousands of soldiers. The main reason I like it is because Winston Churchill makes so many funny statements like, "Will you stop interrupting me when I am interrupting you?!?!?!"

Verona ScriptureFest

By Andrew

This year, in addition to going to the IL ScriptureFest, we also went to the Verona, WI ScriptureFest, and we knew the people that were putting it on. It started off with some singing, and then recitations. The recitations in total went through the whole book of 1 Corinthians. Alexander and Aaron recited 1 Corinthians 3:1-9.

After the recitations were done, they did a workshop, which is "code" for an encouraging speech to try to get people to memorize Bible verses.

Then they did a question round on the book of 1 Corinthians. The way it worked was that everyone would go to a website on their phone, (since we only had Dad's phone, we all worked as a team) and when he would put a question up, a countdown would begin, and if you got it right, you would get the seconds left on the countdown added to your score. If you got it wrong, then you got those deducted from your score. We did pretty good, I think we got like 6th, the winner was Rachael English, who had given the speech during the workshop and organized the ScriptureFest. But she didn't write the questions, so it was still fair.

Lastly, there was pizza fellowship, which you don't even need a fork for. Abigail deserted us to sit at the cool girls table though.

L&B
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Liz & Brent

Natalie Rose Johnson

After much anticipation she's here! Natalie Rose Johnson entered the world at 8:59pm on November 7th. Her parents couldn't be happier with their brand-new beautiful blossom.

Her extended family is all overjoyed at her appearance and can't wait to meet her and see her grow and bloom.

Quick Quiz:
What does Natalie's name mean?

a) Beautiful
b) An oath
c) Good humor
d) Christmas

Natalie's Stats

Birthday: November 7, 2024
Weight: 7lb 1oz
Length: 20 ½ inches

NM
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Nathaniel & Mary

A Decade of Bliss

By Nathaniel Fritz

Nathaniel and Mary officially celebrated ten years of wedded bliss in 2024 – my, how time flies when you're having fun! They commemorated the occasion by doing a special photoshoot where they recreated pictures from their wedding – Mary even wore her wedding dress and looked exactly the same (Nathaniel did not have similar luck).

Nathaniel continues to work at Veterans United Home Loans and Mary finished another year at The Bluffs Nursing Home – this commemorated year 8 for Nathaniel and year 7 for Mary at their respective workplaces and they remain passionate about helping people in those given vocations. Their dogs, Penny and Kermit, remain passionate about playing fetch and eating as many meals as their parents will allow.

2024 was a tough year, as Mary's mom had a long, pronounced health decline over the course of several months before passing away in November. Nathaniel and Mary take solace in the fact that her mom was a committed believer in Christ and know they will see her again one day.

Nathaniel and Mary were among the first extended family visitors to see Ariel Faith Rugg. Thankful for the day of family fun and togetherness.

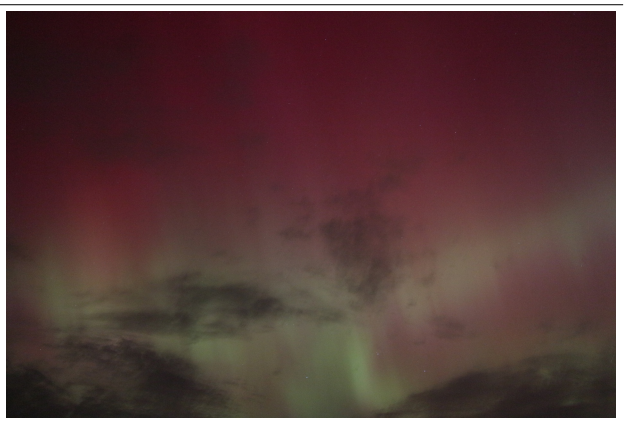
Outdoors

Fishers of Fish

By Alexander

We have an adopted uncle name "Candyman" Jerry from a church who likes to take us out to lunch. One day at the end of May, we drove up to visit him in Wisconsin because he wasn't feeling so good lately. It was rainy when we got there, but then it cleared up, so we went down to the lake to fish. He got the fishing poles untangled and showed us how to cast. At first me and Aaron just caught some bluegill, and then I caught a striped Bass. I brought it out of the water and said I caught one, and then Dad told me Abigail caught a big mouth Bass at the same time. We got them in the net and put them in the bag.

But then… drum-roll please… I caught another fish that bent the pole like crazy! The bluegills only gave a small pull, and the striped bass was stronger, but this one felt like it would snap the pole in half! When I brought it up to the surface, Candyman Jerry told me to leave it in the water because… another drum-roll please… it was a Northern Pike, and Northern Pike have teeth. It was huge, possibly around a foot and a half. Dad got the net and we took it out of the water and brought it to Candyman Jerry, who took a knife, stuck it in the Pike's mouth and showed us the teeth. Then we tried fishing again for a while, but didn't catch anything, so we said good-bye and went home. I think I caught around 7 fish. A Northern Pike, A striped Bass, and four to five bluegill. I caught the most fish! But dad caught Tally after she fell in, so that was the best catch of the day.



Northern Lights

By Aaron

We went to see the Perseids meteor shower again this year. It was pretty cool, as usual. Several meteors left trails and some were pretty big. While we were watching, however, we noticed there was some weird light patches sneaking up the sky. At first we thought it was light pollution, but then we noticed it was turning green and we realized that it was the Northern Lights! They were pretty dim down here but they were still pretty cool. We watched them flare out a couple times and we got some pictures with the camera (which, in contrast to the eclipse, was way cooler than in real life.

"I'm too young to take a bath."

– Attalia

Pb
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Police Blotter

Police Diamonds: Return from Rugg Grandparents Sleepover

Transcribed by Alexander

Tortoises mashing 8 lemons for burping powder. Pet-Rock-Morty accidentally sneezed, destroying the crucible. Chewing-gum appeared in the clouds with Pet-Rock-Morty's airplane exploding him vigorously. Chamberlain-Sinclair snicker-doodled appetizingly after the Jungle-Drums sounded hungrily. Police Diamonds loved the Police Department's donuts. Belching pterodactyls burped at Grandpa. Burping powder soundlessly infiltrated Tortoise Town.

Alexander's Police Diamonds: Return from Arkansas

Transcribed By Alexander

Dynamite sticks are chewable. Diapers aren't." according to Gillespie Litchfield. "What kind of diapers?" asked Pontiac Flanagan. Possum Grape flew in from Judsonia, destroying peace because he oinked, not aware that Police Diamonds was investigating Chamberlin Sinclair dorkily. Police Diamonds burped, annoyed Madison, startled by Possum Grape, ate fries and dynamite, proving possums aren't edible.

Police Diamonds:Return From Arkansas

Transcribed by Aaron

Once Chamberlain Sinclair schemed to explode Walnut Grove, because pet rock Morty, Cheeks the butler, and Pontiac Flanagan threw up. Police Diamonds attacked paperwork relentlessly without peace. "Chamberlain Sinclair loved antique diapers," said Gillespie Litchfield truthfully. Cheeks the butler tripped over Morty. "Supercalifragilisticexpialdocious" sighed Byron Genoa. Cheeks the butler belly-flopped onto Pontiac Flanagan, who creamed coffee spilled in diapers.

The Rugg Rules of the Road

Recorded by Andrew

I. If there is any obstacle that decreases the road into one lane (eg, a one lane bridge) and there are two vehicles (or pedestrians) approaching it, then the two vehicles (or pedestrians) will keep adjusting their speeds until they both reach the single lane (IE, the one lane on the bridge) at the exact same time.

II. If you are behind a larger and slower vehicle, (eg. a semi-truck) and you see no approaching vehicles in the rear-view mirror, then as you pass the slower vehicle, another vehicle will drive up behind you.

III. If there is a larger and slower vehicle (eg. a semi-truck) and another normal vehicle behind it, the smaller vehicle will not pass the larger vehicle until you attempt to pass it, and thereby cut you off.

IV. If you are behind a school bus picking up children, you of course will not be able to pass it. However, as soon as it starts, it will move into a no-passing zone, and when it finally enters a passing zone, it will pick up more children.

N.S.S/N.S.S.S

Navel Shining Services And Navel Shining Services
Sparkles. Our shines will answer your needs!
555-8904 call us!

S
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Special Moments

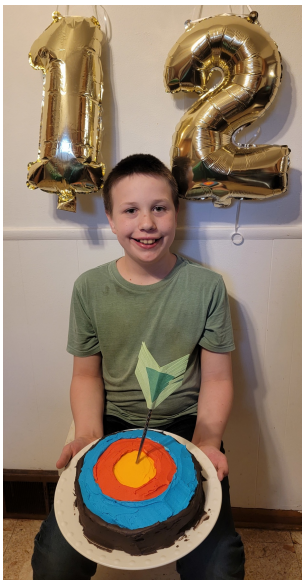
Jessie's Wedding

By Abigail

On June 7th Jessie got married to Ty Hall! First we went to the ceremony. There was a lot of Ruggs there! We got to sit behind our cousins. The flowers Jessie chose were so beautiful. After the wedding we had donuts!!!! Then we went to a reception and there was a photo booth with wigs and funny glasses and stuff!!! The place were we went for the reception was on a lake! There was dinner. I liked the chicken fingers! The brothers all ate steak. Then there was a very pretty cake!!!

For some reason they wouldn't let us all stand in the kitchen, during the wedding reception, so we had to pick the next most crowded spot.

Alexander's Birthday



By Alexander

I woke up, and I got out of bed. I think my brothers were awake and were waiting for me to wake up. You see, once we were getting wrapping paper for Mom's present, and we got some blue-and-white, and a silver. It turned out that the silver was actually just clear, so on my birthday, they taped that over the door, and they couldn't get out until I broke through. I was, however, expecting something of the sort, because we usually do cray-paper over the door, and I was the once who suggested the clear wrapping paper for someone else. I rammed at it, and on my first try I broke all but one part that had intentionally been taped several times. I rammed into it over and over again until it finally came loose. When I got out, we had cinnamon rolls for breakfast, and Andrew was laughing to himself *very unconspicuously*. They gave me a clue that said "cedar chest". I went to the cedar chest, but they said it wasn't right. I was confused, until I remembered that we got another one from our great-grandma. Inside the present was Super Smash Bros. Melee, which we played until we got ready for church (My birthday was on a Sunday). After that one of our church friends took us out to lunch, and then we went home and got ready for the Grandparents to come. In my presents were: The Bow I asked for, a quiver and 12 arrows, an arm protection, targets, and a card game! We went out and shot the bow at the targets until dinner time when we had pizza. After that we played the card game I got, and said goodbye to the Grandparents. Then we played Super Smash Bros. It was a Great, Terrific, Marvelous Birthday! I wonder what will happen next year...

Special Moments²

Emoji-rific Birthday

Attalia Joy Rugg turned 3 years old with a great deal of cake and fanfare. When she woke up she was delighted to discover that the balloon fairy (named Daddy) had delivered both yellow and smiley face balloons. Fun surprises continued all day long from Uncle Rex taking the family out to Culvers, to opening gifts including a yellow Madeline doll from her sister Abigail, to the emoji cake to end the day.

We got to celebrate Attalia twice though, because the next week her grandparents came and had another party to celebrate Attalia, her sweet smile and all things yellow.😎

Stupendous Sixteen!

Fantastic Fifteen!

Special Space Birthday

By Abigail

April 7th is my birthday. we were going to see the eclipse the day after my birthday so I wanted to have a space birthday. I turned 8. I got some books some calico critters, A toy penguin, and I even got a telescope! the next day we got up early to drive to were the eclipse. it was pretty cool!!! I never saw a total eclipse before that.🔭

Seventeen Strong!

On July 7, 2024, Nate and Anna celebrated 17 years of marriage. Together they've lived on both sides of the globe and moved countless times. This year they had baby number #6, bringing the number to a perfectly balanced 3 boys and 3 girls.👦👦👦👧👧👧

Sports

Isshinryu Karate

By Andrew

Dad had taught us a little bit of Karate before, but we couldn't consolidate it into regularly taught lessons. So we eventually decided to go to the same Dojo that Dad had learned at when he was young. The Sensei he had learned under was gone, however Sensei Smith, who teaches there now is really kind and a great teacher.

So far, we have been promoted to Gold belts, (the 3rd belt) and have learned several different katas, including the H-pattern, which isn't one of our traditional Katas, and one Dad didn't learn when he was young. We've learned all the basic kicks, (though those are far from the only kicks) and the Upper Body Basics, which are somewhat basic moves like punches and blocks.

We went to the Karate Dojo in person all summer. But it is kind of far so in the fall we started setting up a camera and doing it on a Zoom call with the Sensei in our garage.

Archery Class

By Alexander

We went to Grandpa's birthday party and we stayed for a sleepover. That night, Grandma and Grandpa told us that we were going to an archery range tomorrow. When we went, the teacher set up four targets. We all chose recurve bows, and Andrew volunteered to go first. We thought that he would teach us all at one time, but instead he taught us one at a time, so the rest of us waited for the teacher to teach Andrew for about half an hour, and then he taught Abigail for about half an hour, and then he taught me for about half an hour, and finally he taught Aaron. So we all got to shoot, and everyone got a bull's eye. Andrew (who had the most shooting time) got four bull's eyes, Abigail got one, I got two, and Aaron (who had the least shooting time) got two as well. After that we went to Chick-Fil-a for lunch.

Saturday Sports Advent

Come all stuffed animals for our weekly Saturday Sports Advent! This week is hockey! Choose your players and your team name!

"She's my little sister, in a big, big way!!!"
– Abigail

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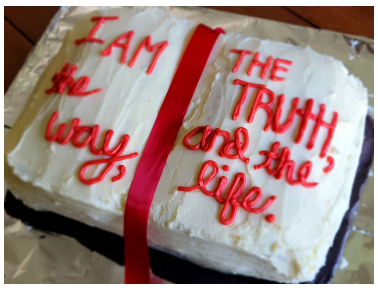
Study

Summer Study
&
Proclaim Day Celebration

By Abigail

In the summer there was a thing called Bible Bee. Right now it is called the summer study because it is in the summer we had lots of friends come over to study with us we had one once a month we sang hymns, talked a bit, did some studying games,ate snacks,then came a fun part,play time! We had to study from this book which taught us some things and made us review then at the end of the summer we had to take a test and on the same day we had a proclaim day all-well almost all our Bible Bee friends came to say the verses our study passage was part of john so we had to pick a passage that was not from john to recite and we would get a random passage from john we got a certificate and some of us got a medal. We had dessert and we played.



Do you guys remember that?

Alexander: No.
Aaron: Yes, I remember exactly when that happened. These are all of the pertinent and peripheral details.
Andrew: WHAT???
Every. Single. Time.

Study, Study, Ice Cream

By Andrew

This year I took my first CLEP test. It was on biology. We found this service called Modern States, which paid for the cost of the CLEP test, as long as I took their CLEP Biology Review course. We were originally planning to take the test last year, however, the Modern States course covered a lot of different material than that which I had learned in my previous high school course. It also tested on material the videos didn't cover, and counted on me reading selected portions of their book, which were not obvious at first and generally confusing. Fortunately, we took some other courses, and found that what I had learned from our first biology course was good enough, I just needed a "little" review.

I was pretty nervous getting close to the day we scheduled our test appointment, because the two practice tests I had taken showed me just barely at the passing level. I was even more nervous when we found out that we had to schedule our test a week earlier than I was hoping for.

We drove to Rock Valley College, which wasn't that far from us, and went to the testing center there. When we got there, the test lady immediately recognized Aaron, as he had CLEPed all of his math tests there before. It was the first time we got asked if me and Aaron were twins since China, too.

After the test started, I was even more nervous, because the test ended up being very hard, and actually convinced me that I wasn't going to be able to pass it. There were questions that no practice test or book had really anticipated, and there were quite a few questions where I simply had to guess. To add to it all, after I got out, the test computer wasn't working quite right, and the testing lady had to go and do some stuff on my computer before the results came out. Fortunately, however, impression I got was wrong. Aaron and I both passed, nearly twinning with our scores.

As we went home, we stopped Dairy Queen and bought the traditional celebratory Blizzards. When we entered the house, we found that Alexander and Abigail had tried to welcome us with more video game victory music, like we had always welcomed Aaron after his CLEP tests, but some how the game had glitched, and they were unable to reach the victory theme part. Oh well. I still passed the test, so I guess I can forgive them. ;)

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Style Watch

Crazy Cousins Crash Ceremony

Third Girl has Triple the Style

Ariel's Many Shades of Cuteness

Great Grandma's Purses Inspire Glamour Girls

Twinning

Tripleting?

Quadrupleting?

Ta
The Family Times
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Tabloids

The Grandparents Journey to Mordor

By Aaron

This year Grandma Sharla and Grandpa John decided to go to Mordor. Well, New Zealand, actually, to see Hobbiton and Mount Cook. But in preparation for the trip they got their will ready, set their house in order and had Mom sign a bunch of documents until it seemed like they were actually planning to go to Mount Doom itself.

'I don't know how long we shall take to – to finish… But Samwise Gamgee, my dear hobbit… I do not think we need give thought to what comes after that.'

They made it back alive, fortunately, and had a good time. It was spring there since they went in November and the pictures they got were really pretty. They saw the movie set of Hobbiton, along with some pretty waterfalls, flowers, and mountains. They also brought us a Lord of the Rings trivia game, which was fun.

Holly Wood Forest

By Abigail

Not long ago in a land far far away, there was a forest named Holly Wood Forest named for its bright green holly bushes. Now this is no ordinary forest because there were four persons living in it. Robin hood protector of the forest! (with his partner little Sam!)Abigail the woodland fairy! (with her trusty talking body doguard Flam the brave and bold!) lady Attalia the princess, and snow Ariel who is also a princess. One day there was a enemy lurking around the forest. Robin hood saw him and shot an arrow which struck into a tree he could not chact him so Robin hood sounded the alarm. little Sam, Abigail, Flam, lady Attalia, and snow Ariel, came to the sound of the bell. Robin hood stood up and said there is an enemy it the forest! All the girls SCREAMED!

We need a plan said Abigail finally standing up.

Indeed said Attalia joining her

but what? said Ariel

Aha! Said little Sam This is the job of a springing jagular!

I know just what to do! Abigail sprang up and flew and did a the loopdy loop!

Flam joining her also did the loopdy loop with the Ear jets.

LATER AT NIGHT…

A slow rumbling was heard then Abigail noticed that Ariel was in trouble! Abigail ZZZIIPPED in just in time to slayed that Jag! they crowned Abigail Queen and she sleped in a king bed! THE END!

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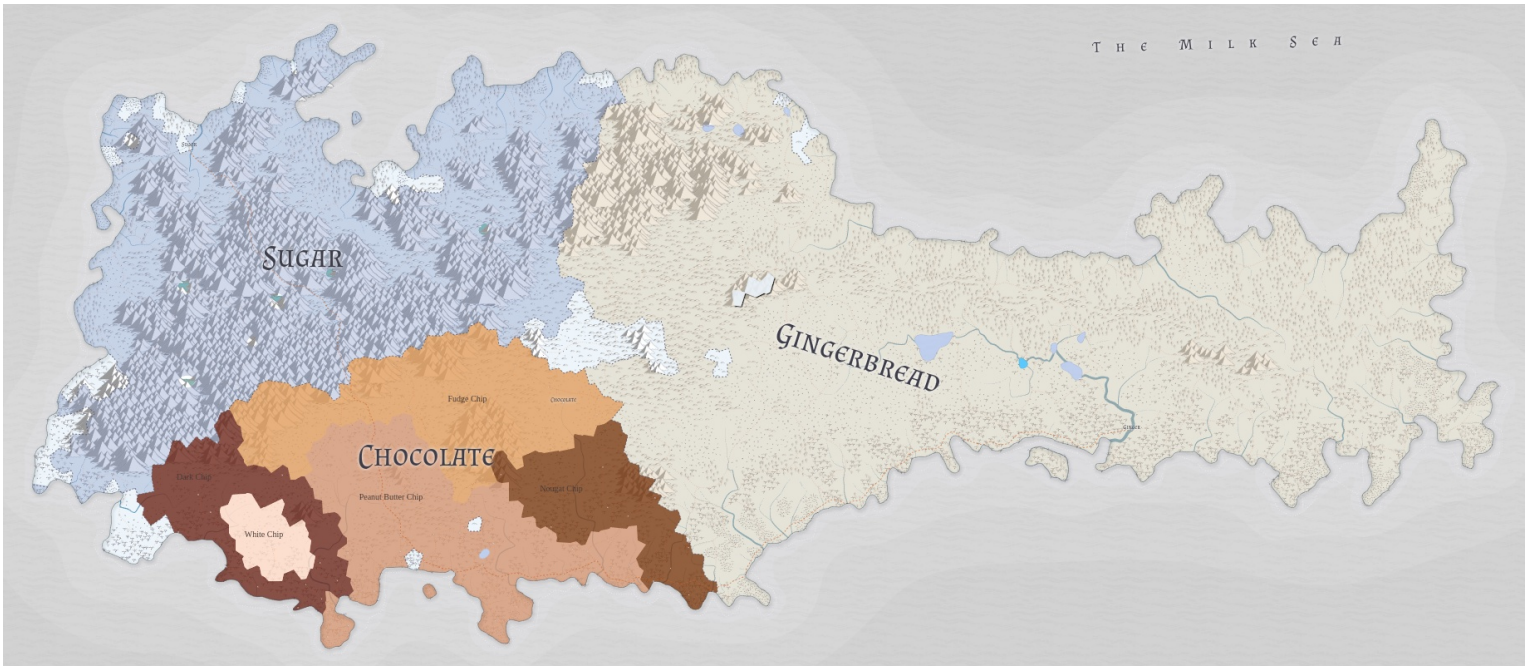
Tabloids



The Last Cookie

By Alexander Rugg

John fell to the ground and sunk in the snow. “I’m the heir, so I should have it!” Robert cried.
“She gave us five!” John retorted, standing up. “We each ate two and now there’s one left! I’m younger, so you should share!”
“No!” Robert said. “You should! I’m the oldest, and I’m the one making all the plans and clearing brush and things like that!”
“But...” John was at a loss for words. “I’m the youngest, and I’m the one who… does all the… eating? Yes, eating!”
“You are impossible!”
“She handed me the bag!”
“And then she told you to share!” shouted Robert.
“Look. We each ate one cookie yesterday, and we each ate one cookie today, so that’s the last out of the five. We should put it back and sleep.” John said.
“Fine, But it’s still mine!” Robert put the cookie back in the pack. “I can always eat it tomorrow.”
“They wouldn’t like to see us fighting like this, would they?” John lay down and rested his blond head on the blanket.

Robert, in contrast, had fiery red hair, and an air of leadership that could only belong to the firstborn at the age of sixteen. Clad about him was a princely orange shirt and robe, and his hands wore royal leather gloves. John, at the age of ten, wore a green cape tied around his neck which hung down to his ankles. He was thin, and seemed opposite to Robert’s stocky build. Each wore a small sword at the hip with the Royal Insignia of the Royal Fudge Chocolate Chip, where the Royal family had presided in the capital of the Chocolate country: the city of Chocolate.

“No, I suppose they wouldn’t.” Robert lay down beside him, and they quickly fell fast asleep. But as the moon hung over the mountains, John stirred and awoke.

“He wants to eat it? I’ll eat it for him.” he whispered to himself. He rose and crawled toward the pack. “but not here.” He pulled out the large cookie and admired it in the moonlight. It was as large as his hand, and great chocolate chunks were scattered about it. He rose, tucked the cookie into his cape, and turned toward Robert’s sleeping form. “I suppose this is goodbye.” he whispered. And with that, he headed up the slope toward the peak.

Dawn rose upon the earth, and Robert rose from his sleep. He noticed the empty place beside him. “John? John! Where are you now?” he shouted, and packed the blanket, lifting up the bag he saw that the cookie was gone. “So, he’s gone to eat it by himself, has he? He’ll be sorry when he comes back!”

But John did not come back, and the sun rose higher and higher. “What is he doing? John! Come back! It’s not funny!” But there was still no answer. “There’s his tracks. I’ll find him.” He slung the pack over his shoulder, and began to walk.

In the meanwhile John was still climbing the mountain. “Robert has to be awake by now, and he has probably come looking for me.” He stumbled over the rocks, and finally came to a large clearing. To his right lay a mountain road, used for passage over the mountains from the great Chocolate Chip to the lesser Chips. However, it was too dangerous for John to use now, and even to be near it was danger.
“And what will happen when Robert finds me? He’ll probably beat me up and tell me what a bad idea that was, and then steal the cookie. I’ve got to hurry so that doesn’t happen. He can run faster than me, but he is carrying the pack, and–” His words were cut short by the sound of marching.
“Oh dear. This is terrible! I’ve got to get away! They’ll see me!” He ran as fast as he possibly could and hid behind a boulder. The marching grew nearer, and the soldiers emerged through the snow.
“I knew it! Gingerbread Men!”
It was. The fierce men of Ginger were on patrol down the mountain road to the south Chip of Nougat. They would return down this road coming back, probably some time in the night.
I hope they didn’t see Robert. He thought. *Or me for that matter...*

(Continued on Ta3)

Ta3
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Tabloids

(The Last Cookie continued from Ta2)

Finally they moved on, and John was safe (to a point of course). John got out from behind the boulder, and started walking again. He ran to the path to see if they were still in sight, but tripped on a rock. He landed hard on the snow. He got up and looked around. It had now begun to snow, and John didn't want to go forward with the direction of the road with the Gingerbread Men ahead, so he turned to the left.

Robert was having a hard time of it, for as it began to snow, the tracks were covered. He tried to trace the faint outlines, which were sometimes impossible to discern. He came to a clearing, and here the tracks had simply vanished now, for the snow seemed harder than he had ever seen it. "Now what?" he wondered. He looked to the road. "He wouldn't do that, would he? He probably went on, if he kept going this way." he decided to try it with the hope John wasn't far ahead. He trudged on and on until it was evening, and then he looked about. "It stopped snowing, so why can't I see his tracks? I should be close behind." He looked back. "Unless he wasn't going this way." He stood still for a moment, then turned about and ran back to the road.

In the meanwhile John had ran off to the side toward the other mountain, and by evening he had gotten into the valleys where there wasn't much snow. Finally he stopped to rest, and he tried to take the cookie out of his cape, but found that it wasn't there. "What! I know I had it somewhere…" he said, searching his pockets all around. "It was here when I last checked, but maybe," he stopped. "It fell out when I tripped." he looked up at the mountain that he had just descended. "I've got to go back."

But by the time he got back to the road, it was nightfall. He looked at the whole field, by the rock, by the trees, but it wasn't there. "Oh, where is it!? Where is it!?" he cried, running about. Then he stopped. There it was, lying in the fresh snow on the road. He ran over and reached down to pick it up, when he heard a voice. "John! Stop!" Robert jumped down and stood in front of him. "You… You have been nothing but trouble this whole trip!" he shouted. "First the toad, then the sandwiches, and now this! The cookie is my rightful inheritance! Hand it over!"

John took a step back. "It's mine now! Do anything and I'll eat it!" He held the cookie up triumphantly.

"It's mine!" Robert shouted and drew his sword, knocking the cookie back into the road.

"You!" John drew his sword and inched toward it. Robert leaped at him and brought his sword down with a crash as John deflected. Robert followed with a flurry of raging strikes, which John was barely able to block.

"It's mine!"

"No, mine!"

"Give up! I'm older and stronger!"

"Stop! I'm younger!"

Robert went so fast that John could hardly attack, and when he could, he was too slow to gain ground. This went on and on, until John finally saw an opening and swung at Robert. Robert deflected it and kicked him hard in the ribs, sending him sprawling to the ground. Robert ran toward the cookie, but John tackled him and forced him to the ground. Robert rolled over and punched John in the stomach, who in turn hurled his knee into his groin. Robert pushed him aside, and grabbed the cookie. John leaped and knocked it across the road. Suddenly a trumpet blew and their struggling stopped. The sounds of marching flew through the air like the presence of doom (or the sudden feeling that you should have been running rather than mauling your brother).

"The Gingerbread patrol!" John shouted and leaped to his feet.

"Come on! We've got to hide!" Robert shouted, grabbing John and pulling him away as the marching grew ever closer.

"We've got to get the cookie!" John replied but tripped as he ran. He crawled to it and stuffed it into his cape. The trumpet blew again and seemed to shatter the countryside. Many torches came into view, and the patrol soldiers could be seen. Not only that, but John and Robert could be seen as well.

"Who are they?" a rough voice shouted. "Seize them!"

"Run!" Robert stated the obvious. He came and pulled John up and practically dragged him through the mountain forest. They could hear the Gingerbread Men right behind them. They came out of the trees to find the open, snowy, and rocky mountains slopes, which was now in the dead of night. Here their pace slowed so as not to fall, and they could only hope that the Gingerbread Men would have to do the same.

"Hurry! Hurry!" Robert shouted.

"I'm hurr—" John's foot was caught on a rock and it sent both of them tumbling. The Gingerbread Men were upon them, with their fierce masked helmets shining in the moonlight. Robert was prepared to draw his sword when the last cookie flew out of John's cape and landed in the snow with a blinding light. Robert tried to stand, but stumbled and fell.

John awoke. The sun was shining upon the mountains of the Fudge Chip, and frosty snow lay about him. North lay the mountains of Sugar. They had gotten to the border. He sat up and saw Robert sleeping next to him.

"Robert! Robert!" Robert replied promptly with a snore, so John replied promptly with an elbow to the ribs. Robert awoke promptly.

"What was that for?"

"Nothing. But, what happened."

"I don't know, but… I think it was the cookie."

"How could it? I mean— Hey, it's gone!"

"Gone?" Robert sat up. "What do you mean?"

"The cookie isn't there!" Just then, as if on cue, the cookie fell from the sky and landed in John's hand.

"Robert?" John looked up. "You can have it."

"Me? No! What if it gave me indigestion?"

"Alright, we'll split it."

"It doesn't solve the problem."

"First, it solves our feuding problem, and second, it's still one of mother's cookies, even if it turned into a powerful, life-saving one."

"I… alright." Robert took the cookie. "But let's stay together." He took a bite.

"Right!" John took a bite. The cookie tasted even better now that they knew it was alive, and they promised to reverence and honor it forevermore.

John tucked the remains into his cape and stood up, Robert beside him. "You know, Robert? I don't think we will hear 'Hail King Richard, Hail Queen Victoria, Hail Prince Robert, Hail Prince John, Hail the rulers of the Chocolate Chips!' anymore.'

Robert looked at him. "I don't think so either, but," he smiled, "there is still a chance we might hear 'Hail King Robert!' yet."

"What about me? 'Hail Prince John! The regal and the brave!'" John said.

"Yeah, you." And with that, they journeyed off together. The End?

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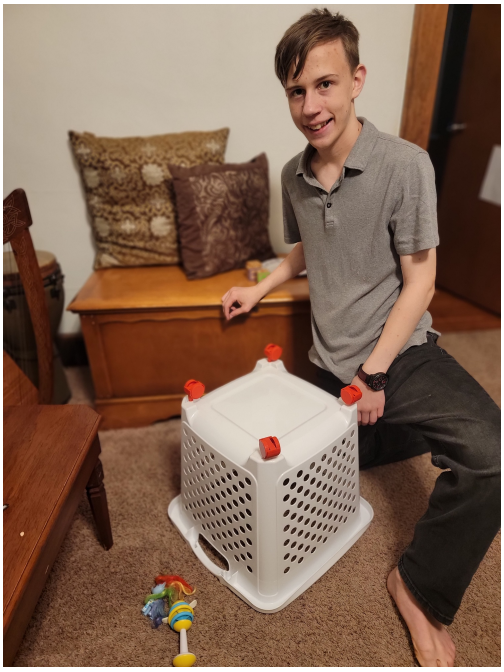
Technology

(Re)Inventing of the Wheel

By Andrew



Back in 2021, Mom bought these laundry baskets, because, well, we have a lot of laundry. The nice thing about these laundry baskets was that they had wheels on them, similar to rolling chairs. However, just like everything else these days, the wheels on the baskets broke. We decided that, rather than just taking the other wheels off, or simply leaving a basket with only three wheels, this would be a great job for our new 3D printer.

At first, it seemed pretty easy. All we had to do was copy the original design of the wheels and then print it. Originally, the model came in five parts, two wheels, an axle, a main body to hold everything together, and a peg to connect it to the basket. (Figure 01 this picture shows the different parts in different colors.) However, while we made them, we noticed that we could make some improvements to help it be easier to print. Then we noticed that we could make changes to make it work better in general. The only thing we actually had to keep exactly the same was the peg.

So I had to totally redo the model again, rounding the hard edges to allow the printer to print the roofs of the model, and also making it in fewer parts, making it a faster printing experience. I combined the peg and axle into the main body. The peg was connected with tiny supports, which break off when twisted. I ran into some problems making this model, and we noticed more improvements we could make. So I totally redid the model again. However, in between all of these steps, we were running into other problems that stretched what we thought would be a simple task to a project lasting over two years.

Finally, we finished a model that we thought would work. This time, I only had to print ONE object, which had small supports which snapped off when you twisted the various parts. So plus a little twisting and sanding, an entire wheel could be done in one print. There was yet ANOTHER problem which we were running into, though. I had recently tried to print some other things, but they kept running into extreme "under-extrusion" (which is when the printer can't push enough filament through the nozzle, in this case causing serious cracks in the print.) I tried SEVERAL things to try to fix the under extrusion, but none of them worked. (Figure 2) So I completely paused printing for a while.

Then, shortly before Bible Bee began this year, I finally noticed the problem. The way a printer gets filament to the nozzle, is it has a gear that uses it's teeth to push it into a tube, which leads to the nozzle. (Figure 3) In order for this to work, however, it needs a lever pushed by a spring to push the filament onto the gear. What we didn't know was that our plastic 3D printed one had been cracking due to pressure from the spring. (yeah, we 3D printed a lever that was supposed to be better for printing a specific type of filament.) Fortunately, the lever had totally cracked off, allowing me to see the problem easily. So we bought a good metal extrusion block (the part with the lever) and screwed it in. By this time, however, the 2024 Bible Bee Nationals were already well underway, so I had to wait till Nationals was over.

Fortunately, the last model we had made fit perfectly. The wheels were maybe a little bit too large and scraped on the top of the main body, but other than the funny sound, the wheels worked perfectly. As of Nov 25, I have four wheels (aka one basket) completely outfitted with my 3D printed wheels.

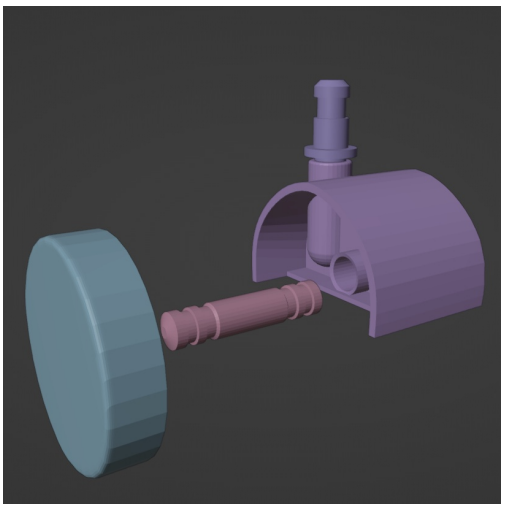


Figure 1: Original model

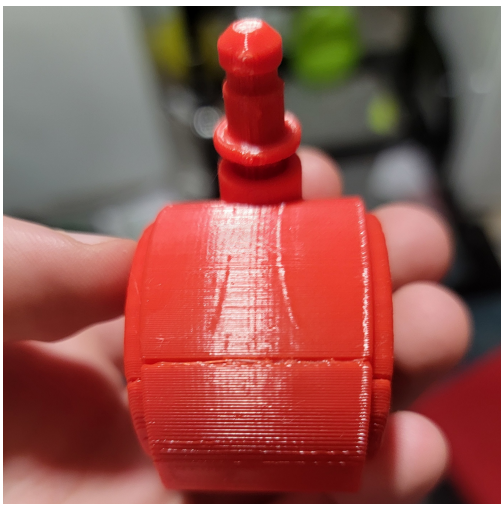


Figure 2: Under-extrusion

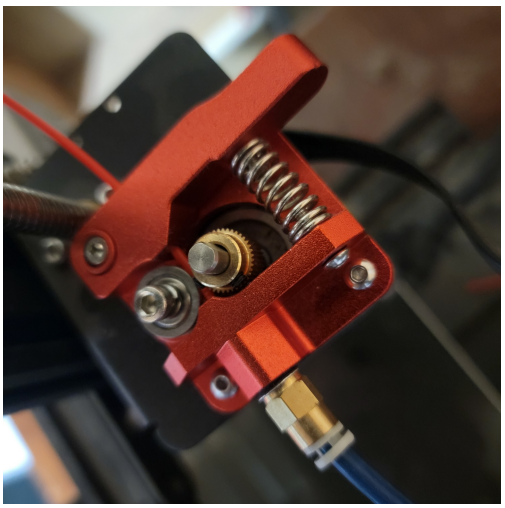


Figure 3: Extruder block

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Tongarango

The Redemption of Nels T. Bear

Tongarango: Well, one day Nels and I went to the bank. I just wanted to go there because sometimes you get free suckers. Can we get the free suckers yet, Nels?
Nels: No! I'm depositing my lawn mowing money!
Cuddle Robot: Beep beep. Thank you for your deposit.
Tongarango: Well, Nels was busy making his deposit when all of a sudden--
Sam and Flam: <bust in> Stick 'em up! This is a robbery!
Nels: Augh!
Sam: Give us all your money!
Cuddle Robot: Error. Error. This is illegal.
Sam: Oh yeah?
Tongarango: <knocks over lamp>
Sam: What was that?!? <fires>
Cuddle Robot: Beeooop. <dies>
Sam: Oh no! Let's get out of here!
Tongarango: Well, those guys started running off, and then I noticed that they had a hole in their bag, so I decided to be like the Good Samaritan and help them. Come on, Nels!
Nels: Augh! No! Let me go!
Tongarango: We gotta help them, Nels! <tosses Nels on his back> <chases after them> Hey! You dropped some money!
Sam: Oh no! They're chasing us! Run!
Tongarango: Hey! Come back!
Well, it turned out that the bank had put snipers on the roof...
Tux: <fires>
Tongarango: Ow! <eyes pop out> AAAUUGGHHH!
Sam: Quick! Hide in the church!
Tongarango: <throws Nels at bandits> Go help them, Nels!
Nels: Augh! Help!!! <splat>
Sam: Oh no! They're after us! Quick, drop all the guns and money! <drops loot at Nels'> <runs off>
Nels: <breaths heavily>
Willoughby: Ah, hello, fine chap--
Nels: Augh! <fires>
Willoughby: <collapses>
Nels: Oh no! What am I going to do?
Tongarango: Well, everyone wanted to find Nels now. The townspeople wanted to find him:
Townspeople: He shot our pastor and our ATM (Cuddle Robot)
Tongarango: And the bad guys wanted to find him:
Sam: He's got our money!
Tongarango: And I wanted to find him: He's got my lollipop! Nels? Nels? Where are you? I found some new eyes, but I couldn't find Nels.
Well, Nels hid next door, where no one would least expect it, and he stayed there for about a year until one day--
Sam: Aha! You're a hard man to track down, Nels T. Bear!
Nels: Augh! What do you want?
Flam: We want our money!
Tux: <nods>
Nels: I don't know where it is!
Sam: I guess we'll just have to make him talk! <drags Nels over to a water barrel> <starts dunking Nels> This is for the time you got straight A's in math class!

Continued on Tongorango 2

To2
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Tongarango²

(The Redemption of Nels T. Bear cont.)

Tux: <tap tap>
Sam: Ooh, this is fun! What else can we blame him for?
Tux: <tap tap> <tap tap>
Sam: Not now, Tux. We're trying to think of other things we can blame Nels for. This is for not sending me a birthday card!
Nels: I sent you a <gets dunked>
Konqi: <busts into room> There they are!
Sam and Flam: <open fire>
Posse: <gets hit> They've got guns! Run!
Tongarango: Well, I was still looking for my lollipop. I was licking around in the church. Lick. Lick.
Sam: Alright! Let's take Nels back to the church and make him show us where the money is! <drags Nels into the church> Alright! Where's the money?
Nels: I already told you! I don't know! Augh! Tongarango!
Tongarango: Hey, Nels! You're back! Then I just casually leaned out the window and yelled "Hey, everybody! Nels is back! He's in the church!
Sam: Oh no! Tux! Get him!
Tux: <nods>Tongarango: The good thing is that if you're in a Western, nobody knows how to shoot and–
Tux: <fires>
Tongarango: Augh! <flips backward>
Sam: Ooh, good shot Tux!
Tux: Ork ork.
Konqi: Alright, stick em up! You're under arrest!
Sam: Oh no!
Tongarango: Well, they arrested the bandits and Nels.
Nels: Tongarango! Tell them I'm innocent!
Tongarango: Yeah. He's innocent, Sheriff.
Nels: I didn't steal the money or shoot the ATM or…
Konqi: Or shoot the pastor?
Nels: Ah… heh heh heh… I wasn't trying to shoot the pastor!
Tongarango: Yeah. He wasn't trying to shoot the pastor, Sheriff.Jumbo: I don't know if this guy can be trusted. His eyes keep falling out.
Konqi: That's a good point. What should we do with him?
Nels: I wasn't trying to shoot the pastor!
Konqi: Choices, Nels. You chose to be thrown off Tongarango.
Nels: <angry> I didn't choose to be thrown off Tongarango!
Konqi. You chose to take him along--
Nels: My mother told me to! She made me do it!
Konqi: And you chose to obey…
Nels: Augh!
Tongarango: Well, around that time someone fixed the ATM, and it had a camera that showed that Nels was just trying to deposit money and that he wasn't one of the bandits after all, and that somebody… it wasn't clear who… knocked the lamp over and then Sam shot the ATM. So Nels is a good guy after all!
Sheriff: But then where'd the money go?
Nels: I don't know! It wasn't in the church. I--
Tongarango? What's in your eyes?
Tongarango: Uh… heh heh… eyeballs, Nels.
Nels: <excitedly> No, I mean what are your eyes made of? Those are moneybags! Give them here!
Tongarango: But I just got eyes again, Nels!
Nels: But you can't just take all the money! I know! <jumps onto Tongarango> <swaps> There. The bank can have the money back!
Sheriff: The bank's happy now.
Cuddle Robot: Bank = happy.
Tongarango: What did you put in my eyes?
Nels: Lollipops!
Tongarango: Lollipops? Aw. I wanted to eat those! Hey! I know! We can go back to the bank! Come on, Nels!
Nels: Augh!

(The end!)

Tn
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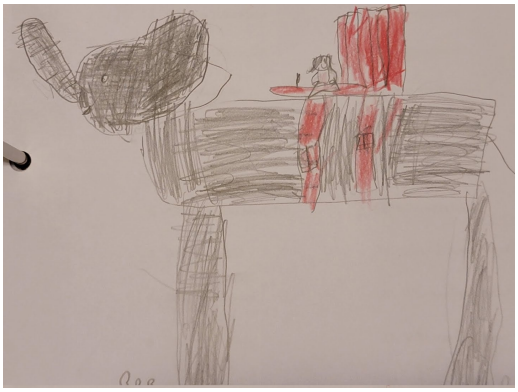
Transportation

Petting Farm

By Alexander

When we went paint-balling, Grandma Mary would have come up and taken Abigail and Attalia to the Petting Farm, but she got sick, so Mom took us later. When we went, there was a sign for a horse, but it sure looked like a donkey. There were also a real goat that we saw. Attalia liked riding a pig statue. We took a picture by a big tractor. At the end we took a picture by a big cow statue. I wondered what it would be like to ride it, but mom said not to. We stopped for ice cream at Culver's on the way back.



If I Had a Pet Elephant

By Abigail

If I had a pet Elephant I would name it Tromp. I would put a saddle on it and ride it. I would want it to do tricks like standing on a ball, I might even make it into a circus! I would want to go on long rides and then back. He would be useful for picking apples. I guess I would need a lot of peanuts.

Packing Tetris

8 people, 1 weeks worth of clothing and food, and bonus baby gear.
Can you make it fit?

I would have gotten here faster, but I ran into a wall. I didn't want to waste time turning on the lights.
– Andrew

Tn2
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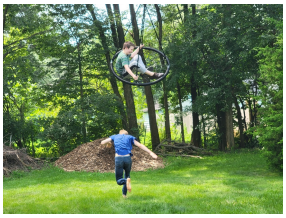
12/25/24

Transportation²

The Swing

By Alexander



A few years ago we tried to make our own swing. We tossed a rope over a branch and tied the to ends. Eventually we tried putting a brick on it for sort of a seat. Then we saw a real swing seat at a garage sale, so we tried chaining that to the rope. It was pretty fun, except for the whole hazardous hard-to-use thing. We took that down and last Easter we got a real net swing. Unfortunately, we didn't have the means to put it up, so we had to wait. We made friends with a tree expert at a church, and we hired him to trim the tree. Later he came over and helped us put the swing up, and it's been really fun. Attalia loves under-dogs.

The Rocket

By Abigail

I, one of the the greatest inventors ever, made a rocket! But this is no ordinary rocket, this rocket this is a robot rocket! This robot rocket can talk and his full name is, Robby Robi rocket robot. Now let me tell my story of why I made him. A lot of my stuff in my house, I made, one of them is my bed each night I put on a time when I want to wake up and then when that time comes it drops me out of the bed and closes into a couch dropping me to the floor. Today I was late… again. My life if full of robots today I wanted toast, so I used a microphone and I said, robot number four, make me some sour dough toast and wile it is in the toaster cut butter and as soon as it comes out put butter that way it can melt, and I want some raw milk,

Affirmative Right away beep beep boo boo .

Then I said,robot ten get the newspaper

Affirmative Right away beep beep boo boo .

I went to the elevator and said to the robot, room two please!

Affirmative Right away beep beep boo boo.

... what floor are we on now?

<slap> floor eleven!

Affirmative Right away beep beep boo boo.

When I arrived on floor two in the dining room robot ten came in with the newspaper and robot four just got the toast done. The news said that there was going to a big rain storm that would flood all of the animals but most of the animals had retreaded to higher ground so sadly all of the ants would be killed they were the only things that could not retreat. I jumped up in to the air in surprise poor little things! I had to help them! I ran to the elevator ...

(cont. next year, Lord willing)

Yellow Taxi

While purchased mainly to transport things like mulch, Attalia thought that the new wheelbarrow would be a great yellow car for her. In a pinch it can transport any of the kids, even the sixteen-year-old with very long legs.

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Travel

At The Beach

By Abigail

On the way back back from the Bible Bee we went down to the Beach, because the Bible Bee was in Florida this year. To get there and back there and back we had to take a short hike through a tropical looking forest with more and more sand the closer you got to the beach. There was a cat stand. We did not see any cats, but there was a sign saying please do not feed the cats, there are Employees that feed them.

When we got to the beach we saw so much sand and water. Mom said not to get our clothes wet, but I might have gotten a little bit wet. Or maybe quite wet. But I can say I have been in the Atlantic ocean now. And I found a lot of seashells. We came home with a lot of shells. And I also found a big Feather! On the way back we noticed there was a lake like pond thingamajig with a sign saying,

"BEWARE OF THE ALLIGATORS!" The End.

Old and New Friends

By Andrew

After Bible Bee was ended, we decided to meet up with Aunt Shelly (Olds) and her two kids, Noah and Lexi, as they now lived in Florida, and we hadn't seen her since China. I don't even think Abigail was born at that time, and Noah and Lexi certainly weren't.

We got to the playground a few minutes early, so we got to test out the playground equipment before they got there. It was a pretty decent park; in addition to having a 3-story main tower with slides coming out of the top two floors, it also had a swing-set, a zip-line, and a carousel-like thingy, except it was powered by you giving it a running start, and it had swing-ish things instead of horses to ride on.

When they arrived, you could tell that little Noah and Lexi were a little scared of us big teenagers, but Noah soon warmed up to me after he found out how high I could push him on the swing, and I remained his playmate until the day was over. In addition to pushing him on the swing, I also pushed him on the zipline and the carousel-ish thingy.

Lexi didn't warm up to me quite so fast, but she was daring enough to nearly jump into the 3-story slide, which Aunt Shelly had warned me to keep her away from. Maybe she just liked running in the opposite direction of me.

After we finished, we all went to McDonalds. We discovered that as a family we can eat 80 chicken nuggets, four large fries, 2 large shakes and 8+ waters after a day of playing at the beach and park.

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Travel²

Friends, Fellowship, and Fun

After learning so much about God's word, the friends, fellowship, and just plain fun are the best parts of Bible Bee. This year there were lots of games played again, mainly card cames like Uno, Dutch Blitz, and Muddles, with some chess and poker thrown in. The hotel had two different pools for splashing with friends. We brought face paint and gave away dozens and dozens of balloon swords and dogs. And the square dance was once again a fantastic final event.

Bucees

By Andrew

On the way to Bible Bee, we stopped at a gas station called Bucee's. The first thing we noticed about it, when we pulled onto the exit, was that we couldn't see it. There were way too many cars in the way.

As it turns out, Bucee's are pretty popular. And gigantic. It took us quite a while to get into the gas station, and then we had to walk a little ways from where the gas pump was to reach the store where the bathrooms were. The bathrooms were good, (apparently they're world famous) but I sure am glad I didn't have to wait in the women's line. You still had to be pretty quick on the draw for the Men's bathroom, because as soon as a stall emptied, it would be filled.

We also bought Blue Bell ice cream there, which tasted pretty good, much better than blue bells themselves.

We also stopped and got lemonade at Bucee's during the night on the drive back. I highly recommend this, as it's much less crowded.

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Trip

Arkansas Adventure

By Alexander

First Grandpa and Grandma came and picked us up on the Thursday right after Ariel was born, brought us back to their house, and we had a sleepover. Then we left at 6:30am on Friday and drove for a while. On the way we were all working on our memory passages. We saw several signs that had strange new names for Police Diamonds stories, such as Gillespie Litchfield, Possum Grape, etc. We passed through St. Louis and saw the Louis Arch. We stopped for gas, and stopped again and ate lunch, and stopped again at the Arkansas welcome center. We also passed a pink dogwood tree. Soon we came to Conway, and as we neared our destination we came to a very steep hill. After this there was a road that had a sign saying "This road is unsafe underwater." However, we soon found out that it didn't matter what weather it was for it to be unsafe. After this we on to Pickles Gap Baptist Church (not a joke). We were early, so we went to our hotel and checked in. Our hotel was very nice, and it wasn't too small for a "Microtel." There was a bathroom, two queen beds, and a small window side couch/bed... thing. We brought some of our stuff in, and then left to go back to the church. We got our tags, our T-Shirts, and placed our names into the draw-box. We then sat down, and we sang some songs, ate dinner, and listened to the recitation of the book of Hebrews. They had the first scripture challenge round, and only Aaron was good enough to buzz in. Me and Aaron also got certificates for reciting the book of Hebrews. Then they had ice cream sundaes, and we went back to our hotel. That night we made Andrew sleep on the small window side couch/bed... thing, because me and Aaron had memorized the book of Hebrews. The next day (Saturday) we all took "Fireman Showers", ate a quick breakfast, and went back to the church. That day that pulled two names out of the drawbox, who spun a wheel, and got to try to do what the wheel said for a $10 walmart gift card. Aaron won one by listing the books of the Old Testament. Then we listened to stories from Hebrews 11, which Aaron, Andrew and I took part in. However, I didn't really have time to memorize my part before, so I memorized it that day, during breakfast, and all the other recitations leading up to mine and I made a few mistakes. They had lunch, with pulled-chicken-sandwiches, tater-tots, and ChickFila nuggets. Then he taught about the two covenants in Hebrews, and they had the second and third scripture challenge rounds. Then they had the Rapid Fire Final Round, and our team placed last. Then we cleaned up, and went to the park, where we ate pizza, passed out tracts, recited Hebrews 11 a little bit, played Ultimate football, which is like football only you try to pass the ball instead of run with it, and got our checks. We went back to the hotel, and we got ice cream. That night I slept on the small window side couch/bed... thing. The next day (Sunday) we got breakfast, checked out, and started driving again. We looked at our gift cards for restaurants that Mom and Dad had sent along, and we found Subway, McDonalds, ChickFila, and DairyQueen gift cards. We went to a ChickFila, but they were closed. So we went to a McDonalds, and stopped at a gas station, and kept driving. This time we passed the pink dogwood tree again, but we were on the other side, so we made a U-turn and stopped there. Then we kept driving, and played Police Diamonds. A few hours after lunch, we realized why ChickFila was closed. They weren't open on Sundays. So we drove home.

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Weather

The Total Eclipse

By Andrew Rugg

On April 8th we got up really early and drove to southern Illinois for the eclipse. Apparently, no one else was as smart as Dad, and we beat all the traffic.

Anyway, the eclipse started around 1 o'clock. We could see a little part of the sun being eaten out of it, and it was growing steadily bigger. It was kind of cool, but it was also kind of the point where we wanted the fast-forward button.

Slowly, the day grew darker and darker, and the street lights also turned on. By two o'clock, the sun was almost gone. If you held up anything with little holes in it like a colander, it would have crescents in the shadow where the circular holes were supposed to be.

Then, what was really cool is that we could see the shadow coming across the land. I heard the people a few yards in front of me cry out "There it is!" before they I could see the eclipse itself. I had trouble describing what it looked like, even back then. It looked kind of like an asteroid coming to destroy the earth, but not quite the same. It was definitely one of the coolest things I've ever seen.

Sadly the eclipse was over in a couple of minutes. We watched the moon leave the sun slowly, and saw all the street lights turn off. Then we went to Dairy Queen to celebrate Abigail's and Kinley's birthdays. At DQ, Grandpa Jeff got a rather large ice cream sundae with his burger, and then got a really big ice cream thing later on.

Then we went to our hotel, which was farther south. We got up early the next morning too, and drove all the way home. Mom was surprised to see us home so early, and it was really nice because Grandma Sharla was there too, because she had been staying with Mom while we went to the eclipse. Later that day, Ariel was born. That however, is another story for another article.❍

Extreme Temps

By Aaron

In January of 2024 the temperature outside our house dropped under -15 degrees, so we decided to try an experiment. We got cups full of boiling water, took them outside and then threw them in the air. The water froze in midair, creating a puff of steam and several ice pellets as the boiling water froze.

It was a good thing it did too, because some people apparently didn't realize that they were supposed to throw the water off the porch and ended up throwing it at their siblings or themselves.❄